

**Testimony of Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs
Victoria Nuland
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 15, 2014**

Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, and distinguished members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It is my honor to appear before you today to discuss the situation in Ukraine and our response to it. These are challenging times for the people of Ukraine and for people everywhere who care about democracy, economic prosperity, rule of law and a European future for that country.

First let me express our gratitude to this committee and to the US Senate for your leadership on Ukraine, and for the superb working relationship between the executive and legislative branches of government on this issue. Senate Resolution (319), introduced in December and adopted on January 7, sent a strong, bipartisan message of concern and support to the Ukrainian people at a key moment. I also want to thank and commend Senators McCain and Murphy for bringing that bipartisan support directly to the people of Ukraine on a key weekend in December, and engaging with President Yanukovich, his government, the opposition, the business community and civil society in support of a peaceful, democratic way out of the crisis. The people of Ukraine saw America stand up with them at a critical moment when they could have felt very alone.

The whole world has watched the peaceful protest of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians on the Maidan in Kyiv and tens of thousands in other cities across Ukraine. I am often asked why they come out week after week, young and old, and from every economic sector of Ukraine, despite the frigid weather. I can only tell you what Ukrainians tell us. They say that what began as a protest against the government's decision to "pause" on the route to an Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the European Union deepened and broadened into something much more in the ensuing weeks as events snowballed. These included: the violent attempt by security forces to clear the Maidan of protestors on November 30 and the lack of government accountability that followed; the second attempt to use security forces to shut down the Maidan in the wee hours of December 11; and finally the Ukrainian government's decision to accept \$15 billion in Russian bail-out money. Ukrainians tell us that over those weeks the movement that started as a demand for a European future grew into a protest for basic human dignity and justice, clean and accountable government, and economic and political independence of Ukraine.

Why does the United States have an interest in how this turns out? Because these same principles and values are the cornerstone of all free democracies, and America supports them in every country on the planet. Countries that live freely and independently and respect the rule of law are more stable and make better partners for the United States. The Euromaidan protestors – students, workers, pensioners, priests, entrepreneurs, business moguls and popstars -- are all calling for the same basic rights we hold dear here in the United States. They want to live in a country where their government truly represents the wishes of the people and where they can safely exercise their rights without the fear of oppression.

Just this past weekend tens of thousands returned to the Maidan in Kyiv, hundreds joined them in other cities like Kharkiv, and some five hundred cars participated in a “protest drive” called AutoMaidan. They returned to the squares and streets of Ukraine to make their demands, and to protest the latest assaults on human dignity, including the beatings of opposition leader and former Interior Minister Yuriy Lutsenko and journalist Tetyana Chornovol, as well as dozens of other acts of intimidation and criminality, and efforts to stifle the media and political activity across the country.

Like the vast majority of Ukrainians, the United States and our partners in the European Union want to see the current stand-off resolved politically, democratically and above all, peacefully. This last point applies to the government and protestors alike, and we condemn the actions of rioters outside a Kyiv court building on January 10. However, the use of violence and acts of repression carried out by government security forces and their surrogates have compelled us to make clear publicly and privately to the government of Ukraine that we will consider a broad range of tools at our disposal if those in positions of authority in Ukraine employ or encourage violence against their own citizens. We have also pressed all key stakeholders – President Yanukovich, his government, the opposition, business representatives, religious leaders and civil society – to engage in a good-faith dialogue to get Ukraine back on the path to economic health, justice and a European future. When I last met with President Yanukovich on December 11, he asserted that he still wanted all those things for his people. If that assertion is still true, we call on him to make it credible through concrete actions to restore government accountability, rule of law and engagement with Europe and the IMF.

In this connection, we commend the European Union for leaving the door open for Ukraine, and the International Monetary Fund for its willingness to work with Ukraine when the government is willing to roll up its sleeves and address the

serious structural and macro-economic problems that have plagued the country for years. The IMF is offering a proven, if arduous, long-term diet plan back to good economic health. Like any tough health regime, it requires work and sacrifice but the rewards are great. When Ukraine's leaders are ready to invest in that kind of program, the United States and our EU partners will help them sustain the commitment. We urge them to restart consultations now.

Looking forward, the United States will work hard to support a free and fair presidential election in 2015. The re-run of parliamentary elections held on December 15th was not conducted according to international standards, especially with respect to alleged misconduct during the election campaign. We call on the Government of Ukraine to thoroughly investigate all reported violations, and to prosecute those responsible for them. We also call on all Ukrainians to help guard their democracy against encroachments on media freedom, political intimidation or efforts to rig, corrupt or undercut electoral structures and processes.

U.S. pre-election assistance to Ukraine likely will include programs to support citizen oversight of the campaign environment and the conduct of the elections, independent media coverage and informed civic awareness and participation. The United States will focus on supporting the integrity of the process, and not support any specific candidates or parties. Like the rest of our policy toward Ukraine, our assistance will be carefully coordinated with the EU.

In addition to election-related programming, the State Department and USAID are reviewing how best to support Ukrainian civil society and media and to further strengthen the rule of law. Given the threats currently facing many non-governmental organizations who participated in the EuroMaidan, we are looking at ways we can support those who feel they may be in danger. We will also work with the EU to support their efforts to disseminate reliable information on what European integration really means to the Ukrainian public, especially in the East, and to counter false narratives and fear-mongering.

As I have said repeatedly over the past few months, Ukraine's European integration is not a zero-sum calculation. We encourage Ukraine to continue to develop normal and strong, sovereign relations with all neighbors. There is also, unfortunately a good deal of disinformation in Russia about the potential effect that the EU's Eastern Partnership could have on its economy and arrangements with neighbors. We have encouraged the EU to redouble its efforts to counter false narratives in Russia and actively make its case that a more prosperous, European

Ukraine will lift the whole neighborhood, both economically and in terms of democratic stability.

Ukrainians have struggled for 20 years to protect and strengthen their sovereignty, their democracy and their economy. The events of the last six months demonstrate that Ukrainians want and deserve better. I am proud to work with this committee to support their aspirations.